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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-fourth year

Identical letters dated 2 January 2009 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am compelled to write to you once again, as Israel, the occupying Power, presses on with the deadly and destructive military campaign it launched six days ago against the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip. Despite the international outcry and condemnation and despite the vast human suffering and humanitarian catastrophe deliberately and wilfully being caused, Israel continues its lethal military assaults against the defenceless civilian population in Gaza, killing and injuring many more civilians. Even as I write this letter, indiscriminate Israeli air strikes are targeting densely populated neighbourhoods and refugee camps. Today alone, six children have been killed, bringing the total number of casualties thus far to 428 persons killed, and over 2,200 persons injured.

Yesterday, Israel perpetrated yet another extrajudicial killing, as its fighter jets struck the four-story house of Nizar Rayyan, completely destroying the home, which is situated in the middle of the Jabaliya refugee camp, and murdering him as well as 13 members of his family, including his nine children. This brutal political assassination, committed by the occupying Power in flagrant violation of international law, also endangered the lives of scores of children, women and other civilians in what is clearly a civilian area.

In this regard, over the past six days, Israel, the occupying Power, has repeatedly and deliberately targeted civilian areas and objects in the Gaza Strip, in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention. In addition to direct attacks on homes, this has included strikes against civil defence installations, destroying vitally needed firefighting vehicles and other equipment needed to cope with the massive destruction Israel's non-stop bombardment of the area is causing.

At the same time, the occupying Power has persisted in its obstruction of the entry of vitally needed humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, exacerbating the rapidly declining humanitarian situation. International aid organizations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

09-20058 (E) 060109

(UNRWA), have issued repeated appeals to allow for the entry of humanitarian assistance that is desperately needed by the population. In this regard, we wish to underscore that reports indicate that the warehouses of both UNRWA and the World Food Programme (WFP) in the Gaza Strip are now virtually empty and the absence of such food supplies threatens the dependent civilian population in Gaza with starvation.

The international community must be clear in its condemnation of such criminal behaviour against the Palestinian civilian population under Israel's occupation and must demand that the occupying Power abide by its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention and other relevant provisions of international law. In this regard, we reiterate our urgent appeal to the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, to act to bring an immediate end to the grave breaches of international humanitarian law being committed by Israel, which are only wreaking carnage and destruction among our people.

We also call once again for all efforts to be exerted to compel Israel to lift its inhumane siege of Gaza and to allow for urgently needed humanitarian assistance and other basic supplies to reach the civilian population. Moreover, we reiterate our call for the provision of international protection for the defenceless Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip. We believe that such steps are necessary to ensure that the bloodletting ends, to ensure the well-being and safety of the civilian population and to promote calm in the area and avert the further deterioration and inflammation of the situation.

The international community has consistently and repeatedly rejected Israel's illegal practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and called on it to comply with its obligations as occupying Power in respect of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The international community must remain firm in its demands and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention in particular have the obligation to ensure respect for the Convention and to hold Israel responsible for its grave breaches. Further in this regard, the United Nations, including the Security Council, must uphold its Charter responsibilities to address this crisis and to help the Palestinian people, who are suffering the wrath of an oppressive, brutal military occupation, subjected to unprecedented collective punishment, military assaults and innumerable violations of their human rights by Israel, the occupying Power.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 326 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 30 December 2008 (A/ES-10/430-S/2008/835), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice (as all the victims have not yet been identified, their names will be included in an annex to a future letter).

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations

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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

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Identical letters dated 5 January 2009 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

The Palestinian death toll continues to rise as Israel, the occupying Power, continues to trap, traumatize and terrorize the more than 1.5 million Palestinians living in the besieged Gaza Strip. In less than 10 days, Israel's excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force has brutally killed more than 500 Palestinians, including 107 children and 37 women. The tragic and continuous climb in the number of casualties is reflective of Israel's ongoing bloody onslaught against the Palestinian population in the Occupied Gaza Strip, in complete disregard and violation of all norms and rules of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

On Saturday, 3 January 2009, thousands of Israeli occupying forces, backed by tanks and helicopters, entered the Gaza Strip, unleashing a heightened level of aggression on the Palestinian civilian population there. Just a couple hours after the ground invasion by the occupying forces, medics reported the number of innocent civilian casualties continued to mount and that children and women were among the dead.

Since Saturday, there have been numerous accounts of civilian casualties due to Israel's barbaric military campaign throughout Gaza. In the east of Gaza City's Zeitoun neighbourhood, two young boys, Ahmed Sabih and Mohammed al-Mashharawi, aged 10 and 11, were killed and several were injured when a shell hit their home. In Gaza City's Tuffah neighbourhood, indiscriminate Israeli artillery fire killed an entire family, including a mother and her four children. Not far from the scene of that brutal killing, Israeli artillery fire targeted the Gaza Municipality building and the nearby fruit market, killing four civilians and injuring 40 others as they shopped for basic necessities. In Beit Lahiya, Israeli occupying forces fired missiles at a mosque, killing 14 Palestinians and injuring dozens of others during evening prayers. Also in Beit Lahiya, an Israeli air strike killed 10 Palestinians, including four children, and injured 30 other civilians. Overnight in Rafah, Israeli

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missiles targeted the home of the Barbakh family, killing five members of the same family.

In addition to these tragic events, medical sources in Gaza reported that Israeli helicopters deliberately targeted and killed three paramedics as they rushed to rescue a group of Palestinians in the Tal Al-Hawa neighbourhood in Gaza City. While the paramedics, Yasser Schbeir and Ra'fat Al-Aklouk, rushed to provide medical assistance, an Israeli missile struck them. When two other paramedics hurried to come to their aid, Israeli helicopters targeted them too, killing one and gravely injuring another. To the north in Beit Lahiya, Israeli helicopters also targeted another paramedic team, killing one and injuring another.

Making matters worse, many of the injured, now over 2,500, have not been able to obtain the urgent medical treatment they need. Medical teams have been unable to access areas to rescue the injured and Gaza hospitals, already dealing with critical shortages of supplies due to the 18-month siege of Gaza, have not had the supplies, equipment or capacity to handle the massive number of civilians requiring urgent medical care.

The already dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip has sharply deteriorated, resulting in a critical emergency. According to a situation report issued by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on 2 January 2009, the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip was described as "one which cannot be understated". It went on to state that it follows what the United Nations had described as an 18-month-long "human dignity crisis" in the Gaza Strip, entailing a massive destruction of livelihoods and a significant deterioration of infrastructure and basic services. Among some elements of the current humanitarian crisis, it stated that 80 per cent of the population cannot support themselves and are dependant on humanitarian assistance. This figure continues to increase with every day of Israel's assault on Gaza, with severe shortages in basic services and supplies. According to the World Food Programme, the population is facing a food crisis, with shortages of flour, rice, sugar, dairy products, milk, canned foods and fresh meats. Utilities are barely functioning, as the only electric power plant has been shut down. More than 250,000 people living in central and northern Gaza do not have electricity at all due to the damage to 15 electricity transformers during Israel's aerial bombardments. And fuel for heating, needed due to the cold weather, and cooking gas are no longer available in the market.

As more innocent Palestinians, including children and women, continue to be killed and with no end in sight as Israel continues with its aerial bombardment and ground invasion, the international community must do all in its power to compel Israel to immediately cease all its military attacks and scrupulously abide by all of its obligations as the occupying Power, under international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, including the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949. In this regard, we continue to call for the immediate protection of the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip, in accordance with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law. Moreover, the collective punishment of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip must end and the Gaza Strip border crossings should be opened immediately, in order to ensure the free access of

humanitarian aid and other essential supplies and goods and to facilitate the passage of persons to and from the Gaza Strip.

In spite of our deep disappointment at the inability of the Security Council to uphold its responsibilities in maintaining international peace and security and despite 10 days of sustained military attacks that have gravely affected the civilian population and heightened instability and tensions in the region, we continue to call on the Council to fulfil its duties in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and to take concrete measures to end Israeli aggression. The international community cannot allow the occupying Power to continue to act with such flagrant impunity and disrespect for the law, which has resulted in the tragic death and suffering among the defenceless Palestinian civilian population.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 327 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 2 January 2009 (A/ES-10/431-S/2009/3), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. (As all the victims have not yet been identified, their names will be included in an annex to a future letter.)

I should be so grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer

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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-fourth year

Identical letters dated 6 January 2009 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

For the eleventh day now, Israel, the occupying Power, continues with impunity to unleash its military wrath on the defenceless population of the Gaza Strip. This is an illegal, immoral, and reprehensible massacre that the international community has thus far failed to stop and is a shame we must not tolerate or accept. The Israeli occupying forces have continued killing Palestinian civilians, annihilating entire families in the process. As being reported by several human rights organizations working on the ground, war crimes are being committed against Palestinian civilians.

As we write this letter, Palestinian paramedics struggle to access the Al-Dayeh four-story home, which Israeli artillery and fighter jets completely demolished. So far, at least 13 civilians, including newborns and toddlers, were among those recovered from under the rubble.

On Sunday, another massacre was committed, this time against the Al-Samoudi family in Al-Zaitoun neighbourhood east of Gaza City. Israeli occupying forces forced several families to gather in one unfinished house. Moments later, the survivors say, Israeli tanks pounded the house, where 70 people were inside, killing at least 13 civilians and critically injuring the remaining civilians. It took paramedics two days and great risk to their lives to reach the house and rescue those who did not die of their wounds.

Also in Gaza, Israeli artillery fire rained down on the Abu Eisha family in Gaza City's Al-Zaitoun neighbourhood on Monday evening, killing the entire family. Seven civilians, including four children, were killed in cold blood and became the latest family destroyed in Israel's war on Palestinian civilians. This family left behind 6-year-old Dalal, who was visiting relatives elsewhere in Gaza. The trauma and pain that this young girl will endure for the rest of her life is something the international community cannot ignore and it should not dodge its legal and moral responsibility towards these innocent civilians.

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Israel's crimes continue unabated, including the pursuit of civilians who have fled in panic and fear to seek refuge in United Nations schools after Israeli destruction of their homes and neighbourhoods. So far, Israeli artillery and missile fire have targeted four schools run by UNRWA, killing scores of civilians. Overnight on Monday, Israeli missiles killed three civilians in an UNRWA school in Al-Shati' refugee camp. Moreover, as of the writing of this letter, Israeli missiles had targeted Al-Fakhoura school in the Jabaliya refugee camp. Medical sources report that this military assault has killed at least 42 civilians thus far and wounded more than 40 others.

This ongoing Israeli aggression constitutes a war crime and crime against humanity. Israel, the occupying Power, is not only shirking, but is also gravely breaching, its responsibilities towards the Palestinian civilian population under its occupation and, in the process, is trampling the very principles and laws the international community claims to stand for and protect. International organizations confirm that more than 20 per cent of the approximately 600 Palestinian civilians killed are women and children. We warn that dozens of Palestinians remain under the rubble of Gaza homes and will likely not survive the ongoing military assaults. Further, we wish to draw your attention to the fact that international aid organizations, including UNRWA and the International Committee for the Red Cross, have declared that Israel is obstructing their efforts to assist the civilians in need, also in grave violation of international law.

We must not allow this massacre to continue. The international community must not allow Israel to continue committing such grave crimes with impunity. All must be held accountable for their actions and inactions with regard to what is happening in the Gaza Strip. History will not forgive those of us who stand by as this aggression continues. Our collective conscience and moral responsibility must compel us to act. The world is watching, in particular the suffering Palestinian people, and awaiting serious action to address this crisis, including by the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility to act for the maintenance of international peace and security, which is being gravely threatened by Israel's war against the civilian population in the Gaza Strip.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 328 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 5 January 2009 (A/ES-10/432-S/2009/4), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. (As all the victims have not yet been identified, their names will be included in an annex to a future letter.)

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Ambassador
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